

3 A SECOND
EPISTLE

To the Reverend

Mr. *BROOKE*,

On his SECOND *R*

DEFENCE

OF THE

Primitive Fathers.

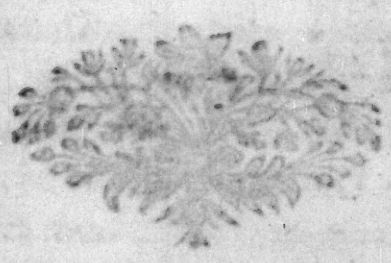


L O N D O N:

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TO THE
Reverend Mr. BROOKE.

SIR,



WHEN I wrote to you
LAST, the CHIEF END I
had in View was, to un-
mask the Characters of
the PRINCIPAL WRI-
TERS on both Sides, en-
gaged in the Dispute about the MIRACLES
of the PRIMITIVE AGES; and to expose
to the World their *gross Dissimulation*
and Fraud, in jointly subscribing to the
Truth of a CERTAIN POINT, which *both*
of them knew to be false. THIS POINT
was, that the MIRACLES of the FATHERS
had no manner of Connexion with THOSE

of CHRIST, and his APOSTLES ; and that whether they were true or false, the FOUNDATION, on which the great *Edifice of Christianity* stands, was equally firm and secure.

Since *this*, I have had the Satisfaction to find, that my End has been in *part* answered already. MOST of the *following Writers* on *your* Side of the Question, either convinced by my *plain Dealing*, or, which is the same Thing to me, judging of *themselves*, that there were no Hopes of imposing longer so *palpable* an *Aburdity* on the World, have taken a *different* Course in this Dispute from their BRETHREN, that went before them ; have acknowledged, in *plain Terms*, the strong Connexion there is between the EVIDENCE of the FATHERS and the APOSTLES ; and that there is too much Probability, that they must STAND OR FALL together. When I say MOST of the Writers, it is necessary that I should except ONE * ; but WHOM I do not charge with the *Disimulation* common to his FRATERNITY ;

* A Defence of Dr. Middleton's free Inquiry against Mr. Dodwell's free Answer. By Frederick Tall, A. M. Rector of Dogmersfield, Hampshire.

TERNITY; because he does not seem to be in *his Senses*.

Being therefore *at present* happily rid of the *WHOLE* Train of *orthodox Dissemblers*, and having only *ONE* of the *heterodox Kind* on my Hands, it will be easier to bring *this Matter* to an Issue in the *few Pages* that follow. But, before I proceed to *this*, it seems necessary to say something in *MY OWN* Defence and *YOUR'S*; with whom I am *so* linked in Opinion, however *differently* the World has judged of *us*, that the *SAME* Apology will serve for *BOTH*.

It seems then, that I have been thought to *LAUGH* at you, when I was really *SERIOUS*; with *just* as much Reason, as I have been thought a *DEIST*, while I was pleading for *CHRISTIANITY*. My *Sincerity* and *plain Dealing* has been construed *Art and Refinement* by *SOME*, with *much* the same Probability, as my *Defence* of the *Fathers* has been construed *Popery* by *OTHERS*.

But if it will be any Satisfaction to the *Publick* to be informed of my *real Sentiments*; *THEY ARE*, that you had taken the *only proper and certain Way* of *De-*
fence

ofence in YOUR * FIRST PERFORMANCE ;
and have *rightly* pursued it in YOUR SE-
COND† ; that you have *no manner* of Rea-
son to be *ashamed* of making the Cause
of the *Fathers* and the *Apostles* ONE,
since it will be certainly found to be so
in the End ; that the insisting on THIS
MATTER *so much*, is not, as SOME term it
Weakness and *Folly*, but *Consistency* and
Courage ; and that HE is, in Effect, both
the *best Christian*, and the *best Protestant*,
who sees and owns THIS DOUBLE AUTHO-
RITY, on which *his Religion* is built.
And WHOSOEVER shall go about *impru-*
dently to divide IT, or *fondly* imagine,
that, by giving up ONE PART, he can
secure THE OTHER, will most certainly,
when it is *too late*, be found to be a *true*
Friend to NEITHER. He may do *this* in-
deed

* Defensio Miraculorum ; quæ in Ecclesia Chri-
stiana facta esse perhibentur post tempora Apostolo-
rum ; quam in Scholis Theologicis Cantabrigiæ,
Jan. 21, 1747. suscepit, cum pro gradu Baccalau-
reatus in sacra Theologia solenniter responderet,
Z. Brooke, A. M. Colleg. Div. Joan. Soc.

† An Examination of Dr. Middleton's free Inquiry
into the miraculous Powers of the primitive Church,
&c. By Z. Brooke, B. D. Fellow of St. John's College
in Cambridge.

deed with *upright* Intentions, and may possibly be at the same Time a *sincere Disciple* of Christ; yet, I frankly declare, he is not *one* for me; — *Non hæc in fœdera veni.*

I look upon it, that there was not greater Reason *formerly* for *Socrates* to curse THOSE, who separated UTILITY and VIRTUE in the MORAL SYSTEM, than there is *now* to curse THOSE, who separate the *Authority* of the FATHERS and the APOSTLES in the CHRISTIAN. And, for MY OWN PART, I should almost as soon chuse, that the World would impute THIS SECOND EPISTLE, as they did THE FIRST, to Mr. *Dodwell*, or even to Dr. *Middleton* himself, as place the Author of it in the List of *these faint-hearted Defenders* of their Faith; *these timid Compounders* for a Part, which they can never retain; *these short-sighted Subscribers* to *poor-invented, temporary Expedients*; which will answer *just* the same End in Religion, as they do in the State; that is, divert the Storm for the *present Moment*, and bring it on with redoubled Force for the *future*.

So

So far as *this* then I deserve equal Praise with you ; and so far we are *zealous* and *consistent* Christians together. In *another Respect*, indeed, I own myself, with *all possible Sincerity*, your inferior ; in that *mild* and *bumble* Manner of arguing in general, and especially in that *modest* and *gentle* Treatment of your Antagonist, where he *plainly* lies at your Mercy, I pretend not to vie with you at all : And though the *same profane* Judges, who thought hardly of *my Sincerity*, may, as you intimate yourself, think as hardly of *your Genius*, for want of *that Salt* and *Acrimony*, which is the seasoning of *modern Controversialists* ; yet,

Τετράκι δὲ κατὰ τὴν, καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο πρὶ τ' ἐτλῆς.

It would be a Reproach upon you, indeed, if you was not able to support *this* Reflexion, in the *Temper* you was in, with the *Virtues* you had adopted, and for the *excellent* Cause you was defending.

If I was you, I should even chuse they would add *farther*, that I might have some *Merit* in bearing their Censures, that to Writers of *my Size* the Science of *Polemics*

lemics has been always odious; and that the very *Name* of it has been reckoned an Absurdity in our *Religion*; but that, in Effect, we looked upon the Sound not so much *unchristian* as *dreadful*; that the Arms, it required, sat upon our *weak* and *tender* Bodies, like *those* of *Saul* upon *David*, and were too *mighty* for our Youth and Inexperience to wield.

I am not insensible, that *this* is one of those Places, which this *crooked* and *perverse* Generation will interpret, as they have done *before*; and that I cannot even *comment* upon a Part of your Preface, without a Suspicion of BANTER; though, in the very *same Breath* I am declaring against it.

To tell you the TRUTH then, though at the Expence of *your own* Modesty; since I wrote to you LAST, I have made it my *Business* to inquire into your REAL Character; and I find, from undoubted Intelligence, that you are endued with all those *most excellent* Accomplishments, which, I persuaded myself, I had discovered in YOU from your *Manner* of writing, *viz.* GREAT CANDOUR, OPENNESS OF TEMPER, and GENEROSITY of SOUL,

SOUL, together with a large Fund of GOOD NATURE and CHEARFULNESS, without the least Mixture of PRIDE, SPLEEN, or DISSIMULATION. I must *insist* therefore again, that I do not so much LAUGH at, as ENVY you for these *admirable* Talents ; and that both your *Intention*, and your *Argument*, is not more superior to your *Antagonists*, than this *sublime* Degree of christian Perfection is to *his* Chicanery and *Invective*. And I desire, that, *once for all*, you would take Notice, that if I do not *imitate* you *here*, as usual, it is not because I *would* not, but because I *cannot*. Dr. Middleton's *Absurdity* and *Disingenuity* are *too much* for my Portion of the Gospel-spirit, and overcome every faint Effort of the *Christian* to forgive. In short, I am in the Condition of *that* Satyrift, whom *Indignation* made a Poet in Spite of Nature ; for it makes *me* severe, in Spite both of my *Religion* and my *Temper*.

Yet, to shew you, that I have at least ONE christian Virtue in YOUR Degree of Perfection, that is, SIMPLICITY ; I will own to you, that *Pride* may have had a greater Influence over me in *this* particular, than I imagine ; for though in
carefully

carefully attending to the Dictates of *my Heart*, I do not perceive the least Emotions of *Anger*, on Account of my not being *answered* by Dr. Middleton in form; yet they rise to some *height*, when I consider, that *so many convincing* Arguments were entirely thrown away, that they have not operated in the least, either on the Doctor's *Reasoning*, or his *Practice*; and that he has neither *with-held* his LARGER Work from the World, nor confessed his *double Dealing*, as I advised him in THAT EPISTLE. Let us now therefore *finish* the Work, and shew that he *ought* to have done BOTH.

It was observed BEFORE *, that *so many* bad Consequences must attend the Publication of his LARGER WORK; *so many* Commotions and Divisions must happen amongst Men; *so many* Distractions must arise in the Minds of the *most ingenuous* Professors of the Gospel; *so opposite* was the whole System to the Sentiments and Judgment of the *best Christians* in the World, that *no considerate* Person would ever hazard SUCH a WORK; as it would be in effect hazarding the Welfare of the

* Epistle to Mr. Brooke, page 24.

Establishment, and the Peace of *Society*, for a Trifle. THIS made me hope, that the Doctor *never* would, whilst he was in his *Senses*, be desperate enough to publish his FREE INQUIRY to the World. *This Desperation* he has since shewn; and, in Consequence of *it*, will have the Pleasure of spending the *last* Remains of his Life, in the Service of a CAUSE, which no good DEIST would chuse, which every good CHRISTIAN must abhor.

To go reeking hot, as ONE * expresses it, out of the World, in any Sort of Controversy, is a Circumstance disagreeable enough; but to do so in a Controversy, where even *Success* must be *Mortification*, and where *Victory*, like a *Tyrant's*, can only end in the *Confusion* and *Disorder* of his Fellow-creatures, is a Circumstance surely most improper, to give *Comfort* to grey Hairs, and gild the EVENING of one's Days.

There were TWO THINGS, indeed, which would have broke the Force of *this* Reasoning in some Degree; and which, if he published his WORK at all, he was next advised to do. — The FIRST was, to give

* *Tillotson's* Pref. to Sermon. 49. Vol. I.

give some *solid*, or at least some *plausible* DISTINCTION, between the APOSTOLICAL and the PRIMITIVE MIRACLES, which I had shewn to rest on the SAME FOUNDATION, and which *no one* as yet has been able to gain say.

The SECOND was, to shew, that the CANON of SCRIPTURE was *safe*, on a Supposition, that the Evidence of the FATHERS was in the present Dispute *invalid*.

But to ONE of these Points he has said nothing *better*, than he had said *before*; and to the OTHER he has said nothing at *all*. In regard to the GENUINENESS of the APOSTOLICAL Writings, he repeats * to us, *only* in other Words, the *stale Notion* of *Notoriety*, which I had *before* † sufficiently exploded; and to my Defiance of him to shew a GOSPEL MIRACLE better supported than a PRIMITIVE ONE, he has replied *no otherwise*, then by such scattered Reflexions in his Work on the *Inefficacy* of Martyrdom; and the *Invalidity* of HUMAN EVIDENCE, to support MIRACLES, as visibly tend not to the *Establishment* of any Sort of THEM, but to the *sub-*
version

* Free Inquiry, &c. page 190.

† Epistle to Mr. Brooke, page 14.

version of ALL. And yet, if *my Challenge* had been disregarded, both the *Intimations* of his Friends, and the *Outcry* of his Enemies, both the *Reason* of the Thing, and the *Consistency* of his own Character, called aloud for SOME DISTINCTION.

Dr. Middleton, both in his INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE, and his LARGER WORK, must be either a REAL CHRISTIAN, or a PERSONATED ONE; and, in BOTH CHARACTERS, there was a Necessity for him to satisfy the World, as to THIS PARTICULAR. If he is a REAL CHRISTIAN, he cannot be *so* himself, without knowing that the APOSTOLICK MIRACLES must have a better Foundation than the PRIMITIVE ONES; for THIS he has more than *once* intimated in BOTH THOSE PERFORMANCES; and therefore under the Influence of *such* a Religion, he could not possibly be so *envious*, as to keep *this* important Secret from his Fellow Christians. If he was only a PERSONATED ONE, he should at least have endeavoured to make THIS PERSONATED Character *uniform*.

— Servetur ad inum
Qualis ab incepto processerit. —

Is true of the *Dramatis Personæ* in much more trifling *Farces* than *this* : For a *Farce* it must still be called on *his* Part; though many of *your* Side of the Question see now the Absurdity of joining with him in it, and *those*, who have already done *so*, have probably by *this* Time had enough of it.

So far then it appears, that Dr. *Middleton* is neither a GOOD REAL CHRISTIAN, nor a GOOD PERSONATED ONE; and, to the THIRD CHARACTER of an INFIDEL, he has as *little* Claim in HIS BOOK, as to the *other Two* ; for there are at least as many Passages to shew that he is NO DEIST, as there are to shew that he is NO CHRISTIAN.

In like Manner (for it is pity to lose *such* an Opportunity of finishing the Doctor's *Picture*) it may be observed of the OTHER PARTS of his Character, which have the most agreeable Contrast in his *Practice*, and in his Writings. By his disclaiming * the TRAMELS of the CHURCH, he should rather be an INDEPENDENT, than a CHURCHMAN ; and yet he has *paced* in them from his *early* Youth,

* Free Inquiry, &c. Pref. p. 7.

Youth, and paces *awkwardly* in them to *this very Hour*. — By his not * tasting the SWEETS of PREFERMENT, he should judge it wrong to be *biassed* by THEM in his Inquiries ; and yet he has NOW as much as he can get, and is not like to be *scrupulous* on THIS HEAD whilst he lives. — By his † Reflexion on his *Antagonists*, that they, like TRUE SOLDIERS of the MILITANT CHURCH, are prepared to fight for EVERY ESTABLISHMENT, that offers *good Pay* and *Rewards* to its Defenders ; he should think, that SUCH FIGHTING was *disingenuous* and *mean* ; and yet HIS PROJECTED DEFENCE of Christianity, in his Letter to Dr. *Waterland*, has all the *Air* of proceeding from SUCH A SOLDIER, discontented indeed with the Thoughts of being but a PRIVATE MAN, but disposed to do his *utmost*, if he might be made a CAPTAIN.

Thus again ; as to the CHARACTER and TEMPER of the Man, exclusive of the CHRISTIAN, and the CHURCHMAN. By his § professing that his NATURE is FRANK and OPEN, and *warmly* disposed not

* Free Inquiry, &c. Pref. page 7.

† Free Inquiry, &c. Pref. page 5.

§ Free Inquiry, &c. Pref. page 7.

not only to SEEK, but to SPEAK what he takes to be true ; one would conclude, that he had *exhausted* his Thoughts on the PRESENT TOPIC in his Book, and that ALL, which is said there, comes from the HEART ; and yet we never can admit this without subscribing to the *grossest* of all Contradictions, that DEISM and CHRISTIANITY are believed by HIM at the same Time.

By his assuring * us, that where-ever he perceives ANY GLIMMERING of TRUTH before him, he *readily* pursues, and endeavours to *trace* IT to its Source, without *any* Reserve or Caution of pushing the Discovery *too* far, and opening *too* great a Glare of IT to the Publick ; he should not be in the least afraid of telling us the *whole Secret* of this Matter *at once* ; and yet his INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE shews, that he dares not tell *that* of his LARGER WORK *at once*, and his LARGER WORK shews, that he dares not tell *that* of his HEART at all.

By the *Comfort* that he † tells us, he feels for not sacrificing the PHILOSOPHIC FREEDOM of a *studious*, for the SER-

C

VILE

* Free Inquiry, &c. Pref. p. 7.

† Free Inquiry, &c. *ibid.*

VILE RESTRAINTS of an *ambitious* Life; one would be inclined to think, that *Ambition* was *not* his Passion, and that he *never* took *any* Pains to arrive at the HONOURS and PREFERMENTS of the Church; and yet HIS APPLICATION to the higher Powers on *this* Account is NO SECRET, and to make his Way to THEM the easier, we know with what SOLICITUDE he begged, that he might no *longer* remain under the HIERARCHICAL BAN.

Well, but it may be said, that a great Part of THIS may be reconciled, if we suppose that his DEISM is *dissembled*, and his CHRISTIANITY *openly* given out; — that he may, like the ANCIENTS, profess the Religion of his Country in *publick*, and yet disbelieve it in *private*; — that he may pace it in the *Tramels* of the Church for a BENEFICE, and yet despise them in his HEART; — that he may think a SMALL BENEFICE NO SWEETS of PREFERMENT, and that SOME DIGNITIES are required to make him *staunch*; — that he may exclaim against THOSE SOLDIERS who write *for* the Church, because they are *well paid*; and he may applaud himself for HIS INDEPENDENCY, and think himself at Liberty to write *against* it, till

till he is paid *as well*; — that he may have the *Ambition* in common with the *Priesthood*, to use his Endeavours to be raised to the PINNACLE of the Temple; and yet may value himself for the want of it, when he finds those Endeavours *vain*.

Be it so: If any one can admit *this* Account, though I must confess it is a *very lame and imperfect* one, I have no Objection. Let the *jarring* Parts of his Character be reconciled in *this* or *any other* Manner; it is all one to me; but, in *Reasoning* with him, we must take it, as he gives it us HIMSELF; otherwise there will be no end of Censures for *misrepresenting* him; and he is *so* explicit on the POINT we are going to try him upon, that I chuse to let him speak for *himself*.

“ MY OPINION *, in short, is THIS,
 “ that in *those first* Efforts of the Gospel,
 “ after our Lord’s Ascension, the EXTRA-
 “ ORDINARY GIFTS, which he had pro-
 “ mised, were poured out in the *fullest*
 “ Measure on the APOSTLES, and those
 “ OTHER DISCIPLES, whom he had or-
 “ dained to be the primary Instruments
 “ of *that great* Work; in order to en-
 C 2 “ able

“ *able* them more easily to over-rule the
 “ *inveterate Prejudices* both of the *Jews*
 “ and *Gentiles*, and to bear up against
 “ the *discouraging Shocks* of popular
 “ Rage and Persecution, which they
 “ were taught to expect in *this noviciate*
 “ of their Ministry.”

He in many *other* Places expresses him-
 self to much the *same* Purpose; so that
 he forces himself upon us as a BELIEVER in
 the Gospel; and we must admit him for
 the present of OUR ORDER; a little un-
 happily indeed for HIS SYSTEM, however
 requisite for HIMSELF; for it requires no
great Skill in Divination, to foretel, that
 as long as the NEW TESTAMENT is true,
 HIS WORK cannot stand.

Let us try THIS MATTER even in such
 Parts of the primitive Accounts, as in
 the Doctor's own Opinion lie the *most*
defenceless and *exposed*.

The *Sincerity* of the Apostles, is
 the CORNER STONE of the Truth of
 the CHRISTIAN MIRACLES; and
Martyrdom is the CORNER STONE of
 their SINCERITY. The Case is exactly
 the *same* with the PRIMITIVE FATHERS
 and their MIRACLES; and the Nature,
 Use,

Use, and Design, of THEM ALL, has been shewn to be so exactly ALIKE, that it is as impossible to *separate* them, as to *separate* Things which have but one common Life *.

Now, What does the Doctor reply to *this*? Why, without taking Notice of *such* an Objection, he says †, that “ the
 “ Circumstance of *Martyrdom* adds no
 “ Weight to the Testimony of THOSE
 “ that suffer it, in Preference to *that* of
 “ any other just and devout Christian
 “ whatsoever;” and in regard to the EVIDENCE for MIRACLES, he has *many* Pages to ‡ shew, that NONE can be sufficient: For having brought Instances from *many* Historians, whom we believe in the *common* and *ordinary* Occurrences of Life, and reject in the *extraordinary* and *supernatural*, he concludes THUS; “ These
 “ Instances are sufficient to evince the
 “ *Reasonableness* and *Prudence* of suspend-
 “ ing our Assents to REPORTS of a MIRA-
 “ CULOUS KIND, though attested by an
 “ Authority, which might safely be
 “ trusted in the Report of *ordinary* Events.”

The

* Epistle to the Rev. Mr. Brooke, page 9.

† Free Inquiry, &c. page 213.

‡ Ibid. page 219, &c.

The plain Consequence of THIS is, as the Doctor * himself has declared, that the FATHERS are to be read, like LIVY and DIONYSIUS, on the HEAD of PRODIGES. But if the FATHERS, then the APOSTLES: But the Doctor says *not* the Apostles; and therefore I say, *not* the Fathers; for *no Difference* between them is shewn, nor can be; though I defied him *before* to shew it in the most publick Manner; nay, and even † intreated him, if that Defiance should fail, to satisfy on *this* Head both myself and my WHOLE FRATERNITY, who were a Set of *cool* and *disinterested* LAYMEN, very desirous of being informed, how they could be CHRISTIANS any longer, if once they admitting THIS EXTERMINATING PLAN.

But, to be a little more particular: The EJECTION OF DÆMONS is a Species of Miracles which both the APOSTOLIC and PRIMITIVE Records set forth in abundant Variety; and the Circumstances, Use, and Evidence, of BOTH, are the SAME; and yet see how *perversely* the Doctor Reasons on the Subject.

“ It

* Free Inquiry, &c. page 218.

† Epistle to the Rev. Mr. Brooke, page 36.

" It is very hard, says he *, to believe what *Origen* declares above, that the DEVILS, for the Sake of doing greater Mischief to Men, used to POSSESS and destroy their CATTLE."

I don't know how hard *this* may be to a MAN, who does not believe his BIBLE; but to *such* a Believer of it as Dr. *Middleton*, it is impossible there should be any Difficulty at all. He has *there* read, that the *Devils entered into a Herd of Swine*, and, I imagine, he cannot well give a better Reason for their doing so, than what *Origen* has given before: But whether he can or no, the MAIN DIFFICULTY, it seems, with him is, the POSSESSING of the BODIES of BEASTS at all; which, in the Mouth of an INFIDEL, is rational; in the Mouth of Dr. *Middleton*, absurd.

Farther still: The POSSESSION of the BACTRIAN CAMEL, given us in the Life of *Hilarion*, does not come within YOUR COMPASS; but as the Doctor, from his avowed Principles, must equally have thought IT, what he now calls IT, a ridiculous † Story, if it had been found in the

* Free Inquiry, &c. page 88.

† Free Inquiry, &c. page 89.

the SECOND Century as the FOURTH; if it had been attested by a JUSTIN, as by a JEROM, we may then suppose it to have been related by JUSTIN, and then ask him, why he is of *this* Opinion. Is it because the Fury of the Devil, in *this Animal*, had some near Resemblance to the same Fury of him in the *Swine*, and that it is equally absurd to suppose him possessing *these* Beasts, or *any other*? The Doctor has ventured at *one half* of this Reason, but has unfortunately precluded himself from the *other half*; and yet, I am afraid, he cannot possibly make up the Deficiency by *any other Means*, than *those* I have suggested.

I suppose, you will be in *some Pain* on this Occasion, as *this* is a Height to which even *your* Sincerity has not yet arrived; but I desire you will be composed. I will answer for the *Success* of the Parallel, when called upon, and can easily show, that the *Squeamishness* of the Doctor *here* is more ridiculous than the Story. For certainly the POSSESSING OF BEASTS is as easy to admit, as the POSSESSING OF MEN, or any other MIRACULOUS OPERATION.

In

In short, his open and professed BELIEF in the Christian Faith is the MASTER-STRING, by which you may tie down and play with this *Proteus*, as you please: By the Touch of *this*, you may at any Time call him back to order, check his Fits of Pleasantry, and reduce him to the *grossest Contradiction*. Nor can he have any other Subterfuge left (if that can be called a *Subterfuge*) than to deny all that he has granted, take Shelter in DEISM, and begin his Work over again. And, when he does so, we shall know easily how to manage him. I will answer for it, he will be as *innocent* in this NEW FORM, as the OLD ONE; and, in Support of this Assertion, will give a SHORT SPECIMEN of his REASONING on this Subject, without unmercifully taking Advantage of *his Situation*, and bringing him back to his *awkward* Profession of the Gospel.

And as much depends upon the *principium, quod dat adveniens*, let us collect the Force of his FIRST ARGUMENT, and place it in the fairest Light. Thus:

D

Some

Some Christians of the FIRST * Century, who wrote a few practical Treatises, in which there was no occasion to mention the MIRACLES of THAT TIME, have accordingly NOT mentioned them at ALL. — Therefore there never were ANY in the FIRST Century. But if none in the first Century, than none in the second, &c. *Ergo* —

As strong as *this* Reasoning is, the Reader will probably think, that it cannot afford to suffer any Diminution of its Strength: And yet it must; because the Word *χαρισμα*, in its genuine Sense, means SOME EXTRAORDINARY GIFT, as it stands in a Passage of *Ignatius's* Epistles, which you have, beyond Contradiction, made out †.

But hear him again. *Justin* ‡ affirms, that he EXPOUNDED the Scripture by the GRACE of God. But *this* could not be; because *Justin's Exposition* is sometimes wrong. *Ergo*, &c.

The Reader must know, that THIS may be called a Sort of *Counter-Argument*

* Free Inquiry, &c. page 3, &c.

† See an Examination of Dr. Middleton's Free Inquiry, &c. ch. 2.

‡ Free Inquiry, &c. page 27, &c.

ment to the OTHER; opposite indeed in the Manner of interpreting; but still exactly similar in its *Ingenuity* and *Strength*. For, as to make the FORMER of any Force, he was obliged to translate *χαρισμα* an ORDINARY GIFT, which signifies an EXTRAORDINARY ONE; so HERE he is obliged to translate *χαρις* an EXTRAORDINARY GIFT, which signifies an ORDINARY ONE; and with such Helps one would wonder, that he was not able to do greater Execution than he has.

But hear him a third Time. *Irenæus* affirms *, that the GIFT of TONGUES was very frequent in HIS TIME. — But this same *Irenæus* WANTED it HIMSELF amongst the *Celtæ*, and was forced to LEARN their Language, before he could preach to them. *Ergo, &c.*

The Use, which the Doctor puts the unfortunate *Irenæus* to HERE, is still worse than that he had put the Words *χαρις* and *χαρισμα* to BEFORE; for in the Passage referred to in *Irenæus*, there is not the LEAST MENTION of his being forced to LEARN the Language of the *Celtæ* at ALL.

D 2

If

* Free Inquiry, &c. page 119, &c.

If the Doctor endeavours to sodder up *this Defect* in his Reasoning, by assuring us, that the LEARNED CAVE, whom he only *copies* in this Passage of *Irenæus*, must be answerable for the *Mistake*; this will shew him just as successful in *mending* an Argument, as we have seen him before in *forming* one: For to submit to *any* one's Authority, in a Case of *this* Importance, is *bad enough*; to do *so*, at the very instant, that he pretends to be a *Champion* for *private Judgment* against all Authority whatsoever, is *worse still*: To do *so*, with THAT AUTHOR, whom he has frequently spoke ill of, and disregarded, is *worst of all*: But to refuse to follow THIS SHINING LIGHT, in all the Excellencies of his Character, and to chuse to do it *blindly* and *wilfully*, in almost a SINGLE ERROR of Consequence, that he has been guilty of, is a Degree of *Perverseness*, one would hardly have thought to find, even in Dr. Middleton himself.

The Reader may be sure, I would not detain him long with *such* Trifling as *this*; and indeed there is no Occasion, if I was ever so well disposed to *drudge* on;

as

as he may find Instances enough of this Nature in your Book already done to his Hands. Nor is there *one* of your Fellow-labourers in the present Dispute, who has not seen and exposed the LAST mentioned BLUNDER, as it deserves.

And now, PROTESTANTS, behold YOUR DEFENDER ! stand still and see after this SPECIMEN of his SKILL and INGENUITY, what you are to expect from SUCH a CHAMPION : Consider likewise, whether it becomes ONE, with *such* Arguments, and *such* Intentions, to inveigh with *so much* Acrimony both against Antients and Moderns ; to charge the FIRST CHRISTIANS *universally* with CREDULITY and IMPOSTURE, and some of the *most eminent* among YOUR BRETHREN with POKERY and DISAFFECTION.

If THIS GREAT WORK was to be at all accomplished ; if the BARRIER of HISTORIC FAITH, in regard to MIRACLES, was to be broken down, and whole Bodies of Men were to be brought in guilty of a CRIME, which MANY of them, I doubt not, with the *utmost* Sincerity of Heart *abhorred* ; surely it could never

never be done with Arms *so slight* as these;
with the

— *Pulveris exigui jactu.*
which is calculated only to *mistead* the
Ignorant, or *blind* the Unwary.

In short, the more I consider the Nature of Dr. Middleton's ATTEMPT, the more I see the *Vanity* of it in *every Light*, that it can possibly be placed in. If it be true, that the Primitive Miracles were *really* wrought; surely *no Truth* of such a problematical Nature as this, had ever *so little* said against it: — If it be false; surely *no Falsity* was ever *so favourably* treated, and in Danger of being thought true again: — If the Attempt was of *bad Consequence* to Christianity; surely *no real Christian* was ever *so careless* about it; — If it was of *no Consequence*; surely *no introductory Discourse*, to feel the Pulses of the World, was ever *so impertinently* sent forth: — If it was designed in *favour* of Protestants; surely an *universal*, and if Dr. Middleton will allow the Expression, a Sort of *miraculous Blindness* must at once have happened to *this Sect*: — But if, what removes *all Difficulties best*, it was designed in FAVOUR of DEISM, and
to

to make way, in due Time, for the SUB-
VERSION of the CHRISTIAN FAITH;
surely THIS is *such* a Close of an *old*
MAN'S Life, as *few* but Dr. *Middleton*
would choose.

I had before * made it plain, that CHRI-
STIANITY, as it is *at present* believed
and taught in THIS ISLAND, was even in
a *political View* of it to be retained; and
that it was *so stripped* of all those *base*
Arts, which the *Policy* and *Cruelty* of
Men had joined to it, that it was not
easy to change IT for a better, and that
of Consequence HE, who attempted it,
was a DISTURBER of SOCIETY. This was
the *ancient* Manner of Reasoning in re-
gard to the *Gentile Systems* of Religion,
in no respect comparable to the *Christian*.
And Dr. *Middleton* must give us a better
Performance than HIS LAST, to prove,
that *this* Reasoning is false, and that HE
HIMSELF is acting the Part of a wise and
judicious DEIST.

Indeed, if Dr. *Middleton* thinks, that
the *numerous* Disturbances and Confusions
in SOCIETY, since the *Etablissement* of the
Gospel, have been owing not to the *Abuse*,
but

* Epistle to the Rev. Mr. *Brooke*, page 26.

but the *sincere Practice* of THIS RELIGION; and that the FAITH, it requires, has a Natural Tendency to bring about *these Effects*; then we *must* confess, what in *no other View* we can confess, that he is acting a *prudent* and a *generous Part*. But then I know not whether *this* be his Opinion, and if it is, it is as *absurd* and *unreasonable* an one, as *any* he has maintained in his Book; for if ever ANY RELIGION was more peculiarly calculated, to introduce *Peace* and *Good-will* amongst Men, it is the CHRISTIAN.

But it may *here* perhaps be urged, in Favour of Dr. Middleton, (and I would really omit *nothing*, that *can* be urged in his Favour) that if I can suppose him to admit *such* an Opinion as the *last*, why cannot I suppose him to be in *earnest* in his *first Profession*, and that he is really *weak* enough to believe, that he is in THIS WORK defending the CAUSE of PROTESTANTISM against POPERY? I would willingly close with *this Account*, but for TWO REASONS; ONE of them is, that notwithstanding the *many Defects* I perceive in the Doctor's Reasoning, I cannot bring myself yet to think *so meanly* of his

his Understanding. However, as an Attachment to a favourite Hypothesis does so frequently blind the Faculties of Men, I would grant, that *this* might be the Case, if the Doctor had shewn any Inclination or Design, after he had been called upon *so often*, to shew, upon HIS PRESENT PLAN, the VALIDITY of the CANONICAL WRITINGS, and the APOSTOLIC MIRACLES. Instead of THIS, his Free Inquiry is to defend *one Kind* of Christianity against *another*, when he is not invited to it, and to leave Christianity itself defenceless, when he is.

But it is Time to draw to a Conclusion, and to *assure* you, that both MYSELF, and MY FRATERNITY, of disinterested LAYMEN, whom I *before* acquainted you with, are of Opinion, that the *Justness* of Reasoning, the *Compass* of Learning, the *Ease* and *Perspicuity* of Style, which are so *conspicuous* in your late *Performance*, must gain you great Credit with all Men of Sense and Letters; that THIS DISPUTE, as far as we have hitherto seen of it, is *visibly* in YOUR FAVOUR; and that it certainly never *can* come to a *fortunate Issue* in the Hands of

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ONE,

ONE, who has neither *Strength* enough to support his Arguments, nor *Sincerity* enough to give them up; neither *Courage* enough to be a *Deist*, nor *Belief* enough to be a *Christian*; neither *Sagacity* enough to chuse a proper Part, nor *Consistency* enough to act it well.

And now, if any one should think, that there is a *certain Asperity* in these Sheets, which favours of *Envy* and *Resentment*; or that there is an Air of that *orthodox* and *inquisitorial* Fury, which has poured itself so plentifully from all Sides on Dr. *Middleton*: Let him *know*, that I am equally a Stranger both to *the one* and *the other*; that neither I nor MY COMPANIONS have any *other* Pique against Dr. *Middleton*, than that he refused to satisfy us in *such* necessary Points, as it was his Duty to satisfy *us*, and all *inquisitive* Christians; that we will handle every other Person as *freely*, of whatever Sect he may be called, who shall be guilty of the *same* Prevarication; that even Dr. STEBBING, with HIS DISTINCTIONS, shall meet with as *little* Favour, when they are published, if they shall be found to have any Remains of *that Duplicity* and

Dis-

Diffimulation, which were *so justly* charged upon him BEFORE. *

You have an OFFICE, I think, in YOUR UNIVERSITY, that of a MODERATOR, to preside over the contending Parties, and reduce *them both* from the intemperate Sallies of Abuse, or false Representation of the Question, to the plain and simple Management of the Dispute before them. — THIS OFFICE is much more necessary HERE, as the *false Glosses* and *ill Humours* of the Disputants are as *great*, and the *bad Consequences* much *greater*. I have *hitherto* taken upon me THIS CHARACTER, and may perhaps AGAIN: If I do, I will hinder *bad Metal* from being palmed upon us from *either Quarter*: I will guard against the *false* and *deceitful* Arts, both of the OSTENTATIOUS CHAPLAIN, and the DISAPPOINTED LIBRARIAN: I will permit neither *Fretfulness* nor *Spleen* on the ONE SIDE, nor *spiritual Pride* and *Craft* on the OTHER, to impose upon the quieter and honefter Part of their Fellow Creatures: I will not suffer the unnatural Conjunction of two *such opposite* Parties, to put upon us that *most palpable* of ALL

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ABSUR-

* Epistle to the Reverend Mr. Brooke.

ABSURDITIES, that the FOUNDATION of Christianity is *safe*, when the AUTHORITY of the Fathers is *destroyed*. In short, I will not *rest*, till I have made *all* the Managers proceed, or at least, till I have convinced the World, that they *ought* to proceed, according to *that Standard* of CONSISTENCY, RECTITUDE, and SINCERITY, which I acknowledge in You.

In the mean Time, I assure Dr. Middleton, that whenever *he* shall be disposed to give *any* Account at all of the Matter, here *so much* insisted on, I will be the FIRST to *confute* it, or if I cannot, to *acknowledge* that I have done him *wrong*. The same Thing I say to ALL his *booby* ANTAGONISTS ; or if they *can* shew *now*, that what I have already advanced, though under the strongest Conviction, is more than the Matter will bear, I shall immediately, with all *possible Ingenuity*, recant it. But, as to the MAIN POINT, which relates to the FOUNDATION of Christianity, I am resolved THAT shall be searched to the Bottom. I have HEALTH, LEISURE, and INDEPENDENCE sufficient for this, and may address myself to THEM ALL with a *better Grace* than Chamont in the Tragedy.

Inform

Inform me, I for I tell you, PRIESTS, I'll know
 In the mean Time, it will not, I suppose, be expected, that I should concern myself at all with the SUBJECT of PROPHECY, and the FRESH ATTACK that Dr. Middleton has made upon us, from THAT QUARTER. And indeed, I shall not; partly because PROPHECY and MIRACLE are so nearly connected, that when once the PRESENT POINT is fixed, the OTHER will almost necessarily follow; but chiefly because THIS PROVINCE already belongs to THAT ILLUSTRIOUS PRELATE, who has a visible Superiority over Dr. Middleton in every Art, both of solid Reasoning, and manly Eloquence; that if THIS SUBJECT fails in such Hands as these, one may fairly pronounce, that Christianity is indeed in Danger; and Dr. Middleton will have the Pleasure, like Sampson, in the last Scene of his Life, of pulling down the TEMPLE of CHRIST, out of Pique to the Christians, for not allowing him a Place of Distinction THERE.

Not indeed, that the rest of this Parallel will hold good, or that Dr. Middleton can

can expect, that HIS LAST LABOURS should close with that *vast* Applause and Renown, which was *so justly* paid to the CHAMPION of ISRAEL ; *not only*, because there will always be some sensible Difference between the CAUSE of DAGON, and of CHRIST ; but because the *trivial* Disappointment, on the Score of PREFERENCE, can never call for *such fierce* and *implacable* Resentment, as the Loss of LIBERTY and SIGHT.

And though perhaps the *cruel* and *sanguinary* Act of even SAMPSON HIMSELF, be not in all Respects justifiable ; yet, certainly, *that most exceptionable* Part in his PUBLIC PETITION to the Almighty, where he prays to be *avenged of the Philistians*, his *Enemies*, for *his two EYES*, must always be thought to carry with it a greater Propriety and Grace, than that Part in the SECRET ONE of Dr. Middleton ; where he *wishes* to be avenged of the *Christians*, his *Brethren*, for TWO PREBENDS, or TWO LIVINGS ; that is, for the want of *those trifling Attainments*, or *Distinctions*, which it is frequently neither Excellence, nor

Happiness

Happiness in one Man to have, nor Imperfection nor Misery in another to want.

I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your most sincere Well-wisher, &c.

F I N I S.



(39)

Happiness in one Man to have, nor Im-
perfection nor Misery in another to want.

I am,

Respectfully Sir,

Your most Obedient Servant, John

F. 39 4 2



